[Personal History of David Morin]

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PERSONAL HISTORY OF DAVID MORIN

Dave is of French Canadian ancestry having been born in Quebec in 1870. He came to Old Town in 1882 with his parents and brothers and sisters. There were twenty five in the family. Has a wife and six children, three of whom are boys, and three girls. One of the boys works as a drug clerk in a local drug store. once sells life insurance. Two of the girls are married. He went to Salem, Massachuset [s?], in 1883 and remained there two years. While there he worked in a textile mill and attended night school. Returning to Old Town he worked in a box mill for twenty years, and then took over the management of a pool and billiard hall where candy, soft drinks, cigars, and fruit were sold. He became very ill with diabetes several years ago and was forced to retire. He looks to be in excellent health now and much younger than his sixty eight years. Is a very good checker player and used to play pool and billiards very well. Attends the Catholic Church and is interested in local politics, and world [affairs?]. Chief interest seems to be in his home and [children?]. Is about 5 feet 8 inches tall and dark complexioned. Has deep set eyes and prominent chin, and if his thick, iron gray hair were shaved off, he would look not unlike Signor Mussolini. Like most of the Morins, he was always well liked. The store belonged to his brothers Frank and Lawrence. The Morins are all very pleasant people to meet — perhaps that is why they have done so well in business.

1

THE LIFE OF DAVE MORIN, FRENCH CANADIAN

(As Told by Himself to Robert F. Grady)

“Ah, hello there. It's a nasty night. You'd think they'd do something about these sidewalks. Did you see in the papers that they was kickin' about the streets down in Bangor? It's just as bad up here. They never think of the little streets like Carrol and William now. When I worked in the store I used to go uptown early in the mornings, and the streets would always be ploughed out. Lack of money? Where is all the money, and who's got it? Go uptown at night and you see the streets lined with cars. Some people must have money.

They charged me $75.00 for taxes on my house last year. $75.00. Forty years ago the tax was just $15.00. The last year Hickey was mayor they sent me a tax bill of $99.00. The people all around me with houses just as good as mine weren't payin' anywhere near as much. I took that bill up to George DesJardin and I says, ‘Look here, George, you may collect this bill, but if you do you'll never collect another cent of taxes from me.” He said he had nothing to do with the size of the bill, and I'd have to take it up with the assessors. I saw one of them on the street the next day and I told him just what I thought of the whole set-up. A few days later I met George, and he says, ‘It's all right, Dave, you can come in and pay that bill if you want to. It's been adjusted and I think you'll find it perfectly satisfactory.’

2

I came here from Quebec in 1882, when I was twelve years old. There were twenty five of us in the family. We had to sell our farm to get here. A cousin of the old mans - old Henry Martin, of West Oldtown, you remember him? - wrote to us and asked us to come here and run his farm on shares. When we got here we found that if the farm had been in Quebec it would have been big enough to support two families, but it wouldn't here. Oh

yes, the ground is much richer up there. We couldn't all live off the farm, so some of us had to get jobs. I worked in the box mill twenty years before I got that job in the store.

“There were no immigration laws when we came here. They havent had those very long you know. I don't know if the B. & A. was running then or not. You see we came in the other way. From the western part of the state through Danville Junction. I remember we was held up half an hour because the old man had fifty pounds too much baggage.

“They used to go up and get 'em in those days. They didn't have people enough here to run the cotton mills and the factories. They used to go up there and offer people good jobs at good wages and their fare paid to any place they wanted to go. A lot of them went to Massachusetts. I worked in Salem in a cotton mill for a while. That's quite a city, Salem. A lot of them couldn't speak any English, of course. The boss used to use me once in a while as an interpreter. I remember once he came over to me and said, 'dave, you see that little girl over there - her name is Marie. She just spoiled a yard of cloth. Come on over and give her [hell.?] Give her a good bawlin' out and tell her it's comin' from me.’

3

“I talked to her for a while but of course the boss couldn't tell what I was talkin' about. If he had I probably would have got fired on the spot. When that son of a b—- got out of the way I helped her fix her machine.

“A lot of those people didn't intend to stay here. As soon as they had earned enough money to pay for their farms they went back to Canada. Some of them stayed here and some of them came back again from Canada. When they come over here now they stay.

“Conditions have changed a lot since we left there. We used to raise everything we needed. We raised flax and wool and spun them into yarn. We wove the cloth right in the house on a hand loom. We made everything we wore - shoes too. They wore moccasins the year around - summer and winter. My father was a shoemaker and a brick mason. They heard he was a mason when he came to Oldtown, and they used to come and get

him to do mason work. Don't you remember when he used to go down to Bangor and bring back a hide and cut it up to make moccasins when he had nothing also to do?

4

“I don't think we had to pay any taxes on our farm when we lived in Quebec. Of course I was only a boy when I lived there and I wouldn't know much about that, but if they paid any taxes, they didn't amount to much. I remember every one had to keep the road clear in front of his farm. (Clear of snow.) They don't weave their own cloth up there now. They send the wool or flax to some big place like Riviere-du-Loup and they get back cloth. That is one of the biggest towns in Canada. It had a population of about 7000 when we lived in Quebec, and it's bigger than Bangor now. I was back there just once since I left. That was twenty five years ago on a vacation trip.

“Everybody in Quebec speaks French. I remember one night an old fellow came to the door. You'd call him a bum here, but we didn't call them that there. He couldn't speak French, but he showed us by signs that he wanted to stay all night and that he was willing to sleep on the floor. None of us was afraid of him. It was a rule up there never to turn anybody away. We got him something to eat, and when he got through with the meal my father showed him where he could sleep. He left after breakfast the next morning without us knowing anything about him. Can you imagine anything like that happening around here?

5

“The French are proud of their language. They speak only the purest French in Quebec. I went to school up there only a few years, but I went to night school in Salem. After they go to school up there a few years they study English. The people can read it pretty well, but they have a hard time to understand it in a conversation. French is all you hear up there. If a Frenchman comes down here and starts a business he has to learn to apeak English, and if any one goes in business up there he has to learn French. It doesn't make any difference if he's an Irishman or a Swede. There are plenty of French in New

Brunswick and Nova Scotia and They're more apt to be able to speak English over that way. The French of Quebec must feel Superior to the New Brunswick French. We call them Shediacs, but of corse they don't all come from Shediac.

I took out naturalization papers twenty years ago. I hear they're rounding up the French Canadians that haven't, and they're sending them back to Canada. Serves them right if they don't want to be citizens.

“When we moved down to Carrol Street they were all English around there and I was afraid the kids wouldn't be able to speak French when they grew up. I says to my wife, ‘I'll make a trade with you: we'll speak only French in the house until the kids got big. Then they'll be able to speak it. They'll hear enough English outside.’ And that was all we ever did speak until the kids got out of school. When my boy Rudolph went down to Maine (the University of Maine) he could speak English as well as any one but he could speak French just as well. He took part in plays down there. My boy that works in the drug store over here says that knowing how to speak French has been worth a thousand dollars to him.

6

“Morin is a very old French name. In France you see it over many shops. The Morins came to Quebec from France originally. We never attempted to trace the family back, but I know the Morins were of noble blood away back.

“Did you see where the king of England is coming over here? No, I don't mean that visit: the paper says he's coming to stay. They claim they're getting ready for it up in Ottawa. That little island is apt to be an unhealthy place before long. Canada would be a much safer place for the king. England is apt to lose that island and all her colonial possessions in the old world besides. Mussolini [may?] conquer the Frenchmen, but he'll never conquer France. France will always be there.

“My children were born here and brought up here. What would you call them? Are they French, or Americans, or Yankees? What is a Yankee, anyway? The Indians are the only

real Yankees, if you come right down to it. Who else has a right to be called a Yankee? I heard a speaker down here a while ago talking on that very subject. He said that the French in Maine are just as much Yankees an any one. Why not? Look back through the histories and you'll see that the French were here just as soon as the English. The only Americans here then were the Indians. Have the descendants of the English any more right to be called Yankees than the descendants of the French?

“Ovide Morin, over there in the store, could tell you a lot about the early French. He's interested in that kind of stuff, and his father, Ovide Senior, ought to be able to tell you a lot more. He was older than I was when we left Quebec, and he would remember more about it.

“Well, see you later. If I can help you any more, let me know.”